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113

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MIDDLE EAST – AFRICA – SOUTH ASIA

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the Middle East - Africa Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

CONTENTS

Israel

Rabin Interested in New Talks with Egyptians

Israeli Prime Minister Rabin on Wednesday expressed strong interest in bilateral discussions with Egypt before resumption of the Geneva conference, but he gave little indication that Tel Aviv is prepared to take the initiative or to be very flexible.

Rabin told interviewers there is little chance that discussions at Geneva can be successful unless the preparations are "sufficient." Egypt, he thought, was keeping all its options open, including the possibility of bilateral talks with Israel. According to Rabin, the recent indirect negotiations, through Secretary Kissinger, also clearly demonstrated that direct Egyptian-Israeli contacts would be better because they reduce the chances of "misunderstandings."

The Prime Minister said that Israel would be willing to proceed on the basis of the three options Tel Aviv offered at the talks last month:

--A separate Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty based on an Israeli withdrawal from most of the Sinai.

--A broad interim arrangement based on an Israeli withdrawal east of the Gidi and Mitla passes and the Sinai oilfields in return for the termination of the state of war.

--A limited arrangement based on withdrawal from the oilfields and only the western end of the passes in return for an Egyptian undertaking not to use force to solve its conflict with Israel.

Rabin did hint at some flexibility when he remarked that these options contained a wide range of

(Continued)

Apr 4, 1975

1

CONFIDENTIAL

"nuances." He said a detailed discussion of these measures could lead to progress toward peace.

Reflecting an attitude that has long colored Israel's approach, Rabin declared that Israel could negotiate only from a position of strength. He argued that Israel must proceed slowly at present because a willingness to negotiate in the wake of Egypt's recent rejection of its proposals could be interpreted by the Arabs as a sign of weakness.

Rabin expressed confidence that US disappointment with the lack of results in the talks last month would not adversely affect US-Israeli relations over the long term. He conceded, however, that Tel Aviv would have to "struggle very hard to achieve our ends" to obtain the large amount of US economic and military assistance Israel will need in the years ahead.

Rabin's remarks, as well as numerous press articles highlighting Israel's desire for pre-Geneva talks, have already drawn fire from Israeli conservatives, who detect therein a possible softening of the Israeli negotiating position worked out by the cabinet last month. On April 3, one commentator who has good contacts with senior conservatives in Rabin's Labor Party sharply attacked the Prime Minister. His article ended with the pointed assertion that Rabin was speaking for himself inasmuch as the cabinet had not approved any changes. (CONFIDENTIAL)



25X1A

Apr 4, 1975

2

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Angola

Effects of Recent Violence

2 | The recent fighting in Luanda between the two principal Angolan nationalist organizations has undermined whatever degree of cooperation may have existed among the four groups represented in Angola's transitional government. Longstanding hostility between the two warring organizations has been reinforced and new areas of potential conflict have been opened up.

1/2 | Now that the fighting has subsided, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola and the National Front for the Liberation of Angola are hauling out their public relations machinery, defending their respective actions, and accusing each other of atrocities, which were indeed committed by both sides.

1/2 | The Popular Movement apparently is making the better public relations showing. It has produced witnesses and conducted tours for reporters to back up its claim that the National Front acted indiscriminately against innocent civilians. In contrast, spokesmen for the National Front are vague and evasive. They argue that the National Front will not tolerate "lies" and has the "force" to squelch them.

1/2 | If either side can be said to have gained anything from the violence, the Popular Movement probably came out ahead. Support for the Popular Movement, already strong in the African sections of the city where most of the clashes occurred, has certainly been reinforced. Moreover, the renewed recognition of the threat posed by the National Front is likely to prompt the Popular Movement's often-contentious leadership to close ranks. Until now, the Popular Movement has had difficulty gaining significant political momentum in Angola largely because of its disorganized leadership.

(Continued)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

12

The National Front has lost a good deal of the law-and-order, populist image it had earlier taken pains to establish. It showed itself bent on killing as many Popular Movement members and sympathizers as possible. This action has reminded many Luandans of the massacres, widely attributed to the National Front, that took place in northern Angola in 1961 when the insurgency against the Portuguese first broke out. The bullying and defensive tone adopted by the Front's spokesmen will serve as an additional reminder.

So far, no progress has been made toward honoring the provisions of the cease-fire agreement signed on March 28 that call for a release of prisoners, the disarming of civilians, and the withdrawal by each liberation group of all but 500 of its troops from the capital. The National Front, which has the largest contingent of troops, has demanded that all civilians be disarmed before it cuts back its forces. Such a disarming would be a virtual impossibility to bring about now that all sides will want to be prepared for further violence.

11

The Portuguese and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola, the other participants in the transitional government, remained neutral during the violence and have maintained a low profile since. The Popular Movement issued a communique on April 2 condemning the Portuguese for not taking a stronger hand in ending the fighting.

12

The communique also called for a summit meeting of the leaders of the three liberation groups. Leaders of the Popular Movement who believe that the military government in Lisbon favors their position, probably would like the Portuguese high commissioner in Angola replaced by someone who might be more partial to their cause. They also would like the scheduled elections for a constituent assembly deferred at least until after independence in November. The other parties to the transitional government are anxious to hold the elections as soon as possible and, in any event, before independence.

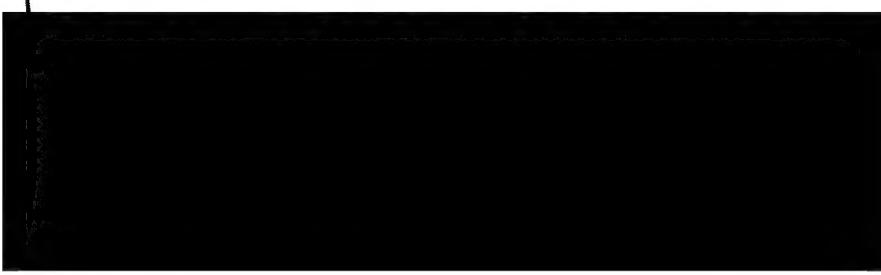
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Apr 4, 1975

4

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2 | Luanda's whites, estimated to be about a third of its population of about 600,000, were not involved in the fighting, although they were surely unsettled by it. A new wave of fighting between the liberation groups probably would engulf them as well; the inclusion of racial violence would, of course, protract and complicate the situation. (CONFIDENTIAL)



25X1A

Apr 4, 1975

5

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